

## **X-Block at Mansfield Middle School**

When parents and students are new to Mansfield Middle School, we find that X-Block is the part of the schedule that most requires explanation. X-Block provides us with many options as we seek to individualize instruction.

X-Block is a 50-minute period of time (actually two 25 minute periods) around lunchtime at Mansfield Middle School. Sometimes the two 25 minute periods happen back-to-back right after lunch, and sometimes a 25 minute lunch period comes in between them. (Easy so far, right?)

As long as students are up-to-date with their academic obligations, X-Block is an elective period. Middle school students love the elective aspect of X-Block. We hear from parents that, for many students, the availability of this choice provides the primary motivation to stay caught up with their work. Students who have free choice for X-Block select one of over a dozen options each morning in homeroom. The selections are made on a computer, and class lists are generated and distributed during the morning via our computer network.

Students who need extra help in a class, or additional practice, or time to make up or revise assignments know that the best time to do this is during X-Block. Sometimes students make this choice on their own, and sometimes teachers assign students to work in teachers' classrooms. About 50 of our students work once a week with UConn undergraduates who come each semester to MMS to tutor.

Music ensembles (band, orchestra, chorus) are the only graded classes that occur during X-Block. Students in these classes know that they do not have other choices on the two days that each ensemble meets. Scheduling our ensemble music classes this way has allowed large numbers of MMS students to participate in our music program.

Other choices available during X-Block include Physical Education where students may choose among games and other physical activities, Industrial Technology (wood shop), Family and Consumer Sciences, Art, Computer Lab, the Interest Center, World Languages, the Library Media Center, etc. Students routinely make pens and other small projects in IT, build robots in the Interest Center, and work on personal projects in FCS and Art. Many students choose to go to a favorite teacher's room to get started on their homework.

Because most students each day do have free choice for X-Block, sometimes students describe X-Block as "free time." It is important for parents to know that this is only the case when a student is fully up-to-date on all obligations. If your child is one who has sometimes struggled to keep up with assignments, please check with teachers if you hear that s/he got all of the day's homework completed during X-Block.